

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Seeks Security Through Peace, Cooperation

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The highest priorities of U.S. national security are the safety of Americans at home and abroad and achieving a peaceful, stable world through global cooperation despite a flawed international system, President Obama says.

The White House released the president's National Security Strategy (PDF, 1.8MB) May 27. It defines the foreign policy goals of his administration in broad terms, and blends Obama's world view with the realities of the world as it is. The Obama security strategy relies heavily on diplomacy and engagement, economic development and other methods of influence, along with U.S. military capabilities with global reach and unsurpassed resources.

"As we face multiple threats — from nations, nonstate actors and failed states — we will maintain the military superiority that has secured our country, and underpinned global security, for decades," Obama said in the introduction to the document.

The strategy, mandated by Congress, is global, and identifies an array of real or potential security challenges that include: countering violent extremism and insurgency; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials; combating climate change while sustaining global economic growth; reducing the danger of cyberthreats; helping countries feed themselves and care for their sick; ending dependence on fossil fuels; resolving and preventing conflict; and reducing destabilizing risks to economic interdependence.

Obama said the United States will take a multilateral approach to the many security challenges it faces. Acknowledging that the use of force is sometimes necessary, Obama pledged that "we will exhaust other options before war whenever we can, and carefully weigh the costs and risks of action against the costs and risks of inaction. We will seek broad international support, working with such institutions as NATO and the U.N. Security Council."

A significant characteristic of Obama's approach to foreign affairs during his first 16 months in the White House — and emphasized in the new security strategy — is engagement through negotiation, and persuasion rather than confrontation.

NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITIES

Obama says his national security strategy begins with

renewing American leadership to more effectively advance U.S. interests in the 21st century. It recognizes the fundamental connection among U.S. national security, national competitiveness, resilience and morality. "Our strategy starts by recognizing that our strength and influence abroad begins with the steps we take at home," the president wrote in the strategy's introduction.

Obama regards the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and specifically the danger posed by the pursuit of nuclear weapons by extremists and other states, as the greatest threat to the American people. It is why his administration has placed considerable attention on a comprehensive nonproliferation and nuclear security agenda that places heavy emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of nations, the document says.

The United States will continue its relentless strategy to disrupt, dismantle and defeat the transnational terrorist group al-Qaida and its affiliates. The elements of that strategy include denying them safe haven, strengthening front-line partners, securing the American homeland, pursuing justice through lasting legal methods and countering a bankrupt agenda of extremism and murder with an agenda based on hope and opportunity, the document says.

"The frontline of this fight is Afghanistan and Pakistan, where we are applying relentless pressure on al-Qaida, breaking the Taliban's momentum, and strengthening the security and capacity of our partners," the document says.

The security strategy, for the first time since modern presidents have been preparing them, includes a priority to strengthen the American economic system in the era of globalization. A key component is to advance balanced and sustainable growth on which global prosperity and stability depend, the document says. That includes taking steps domestically and internationally to prevent another sweeping economic crisis.

"We have shifted focus to the [Group of 20 major economies] as the premier forum for international economic cooperation, and are working to rebalance global demand so that America saves more and exports more while emerging economies generate more demand," the document says. Bilateral and multilateral trade agreements are critical to advancing U.S. and global prosperity, the document says.

An additional facet of American national security is enhancing and supporting human rights and democratic values among nations. "We see it as fundamental to our own interests to support a just peace around the world — one in which individuals, and not just nations, are granted the fundamental rights that they deserve," the document says.

That includes, the document adds, promoting the human dignity of all persons through support for global health, food security, and cooperative responses to humanitarian crises such as the devastation caused by the January earthquake in Haiti.

"Implementing this agenda will not be easy. To succeed, we must balance and integrate all elements of American power and update our national security capacity for the 21st century," the document says. "We must maintain our military's conventional superiority, while enhancing its capacity to defeat asymmetric threats."

"Our diplomacy and development capabilities must be modernized, and our civilian expeditionary capacity strengthened, to support the full breadth of our priorities," the document says.

U.S. Men's World Cup Team Receives Presidential Send-Off

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. men's World Cup soccer team received a send-off from President Obama, Vice President Biden and former President Bill Clinton at the White House May 27 as the team prepares to join athletes from 31 other nations in the world's most popular sporting event.

Meeting at the White House for a group photo, the president told the players that the American people are "incredibly proud" of the team that will be representing the United States in South Africa.

"All right, guys, go rest up," Obama advised.

The White House announced May 20 that Vice President Biden and his wife, Jill, will attend the tournament's opening ceremonies in Johannesburg June 10, and remain in South Africa to watch the U.S. team's first game in Rustenburg on June 12.

In an April 2009 letter to FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter, Obama wrote that football, known as soccer in the United States, "is truly the world's sport, and the World Cup promotes camaraderie and friendly competition across the globe." FIFA is the governing body for international soccer.

"As a child, I played soccer on a dirt road in Jakarta, and the game brought the children of my neighborhood together. As a father, I saw that same spirit of unity alive on the fields and sidelines of my own daughters' soccer games in Chicago," Obama wrote.

Obama asked Blatter to consider a bid by the United

States to host the World Cup in 2018 or 2022. Former President Clinton was recently named the honorary chairman of the U.S. bid committee. "This bid is about much more than a game," Obama wrote Blatter. "It is about the United States of America inviting the world to gather all across our great country in celebration of our common hopes and dreams."

The president later hosted Blatter at the White House in July 2009 and thanked the FIFA president for his invitation to attend the 2010 World Cup opening ceremonies. In April, South African Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane told reporters that Obama will consider attending a World Cup match if the U.S. team advances beyond the first round.

The U.S. team's visit comes one day after manager Bob Bradley announced the final roster for the U.S. squad that will compete in the World Cup. Many of the American players are already well known to international audiences because of their participation in popular leagues including the English Premier League, Germany's Bundesliga, Italy's Serie A and Mexico's Primera División.

The U.S. team is scheduled to arrive in South Africa on May 31 after playing Turkey May 29 in the second of three friendly tune-up matches before the World Cup begins June 11. The U.S. team lost the first of the series to the Czech Republic 4-2 on May 25. The U.S. will face Australia June 5 before its first World Cup match against England on June 12.

The U.S. men's team is competing in Group C. Along with England, its Group C competitors in the first round are Algeria and Slovenia.

The growing popularity of football among Americans was underscored by the May 27 announcement by Danny Jordaan, the World Cup 2010 Organizing Committee chief executive officer, that so far U.S. fans have bought more tickets to watch the matches than have fans in any other country. According to Jordaan, the current total of 160,000 tickets bought by Americans is more than the combined totals of Germany and England.

FIFA secretary-general Jerome Valcke said May 27 that 96 percent of the total 2.88 million available tickets have already been sold, with the remaining 90,000 tickets becoming available for public sale May 28.

Discarded Electronics Pose Global Threat to Health and Safety

U.S. environmental agency head outlines steps on the problem of "e-waste"

By Bridget Hunter
Staff Writer

Washington — "It's time for us to stop making our trash someone else's problem and start taking responsibility and setting a good example," the United States' top environmental protection official told a group of international law enforcement personnel May 25.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa P. Jackson addressed a meeting in Alexandria, Virginia, of Interpol's Global E-Waste Crime Group. Nearly 100 representatives from 22 countries attended the gathering.

Interpol convened the meeting to begin developing a worldwide strategy to combat the illegal traffic of electronic waste — discarded cell phones, computers and various electronic components. Such waste, known as e-waste, is a growing international problem that poses environmental and health risks, especially in developing countries in Africa and Asia.

In the United States alone, the EPA has estimated that Americans disposed of 26.9 million television sets, 205.5 million computers or computer components and 140.3 million cell phones. The estimates are for 2007, the most recent year for which compiled data are available.

China is facing an e-waste problem with both domestic and international roots. At the beginning of the decade, most e-waste came from overseas, but China is generating a rising amount of home-grown e-waste each year. Environmental groups estimate the Chinese discard approximately 5 million television sets, 10 million mobile phones and 5 million personal computers each year.

In a 2006 report, the International Association of Electronics Recyclers (IAER) projected that, with the current growth and obsolescence rates of the various categories of consumer electronics, roughly 3 billion units will be scrapped globally by the end of 2010 — an average of about 400 million units a year. The IAER bases its projections on a broader list than that used by EPA, and includes DVD and video players as well as mainframe computers and servers.

"While it poses serious challenges, the problem of e-waste also presents opportunities," Jackson said. "Opportunities here in America and other developed countries to promote green jobs, spur innovation and jump-start a responsible domestic recycling industry. Opportunities to partner with developing countries to create safe jobs, a

healthy environment to raise a family, and better infrastructure and training programs — and to showcase the environmental and economic benefits of responsible reuse, recycling and disposal."

She also cited the opportunities that dealing with e-waste offers for enhancing global cooperation, improving national security and increasing safe, legal commerce throughout the world.

Most Americans take seriously their responsibility to recycle, Jackson said, adding that they "trust that recycling our e-waste means it will be properly disposed."

The unfortunate truth, she continued, is that often these materials are shipped overseas by unscrupulous individuals to developing countries "where labor is cheaper and workers are often less safe."

An estimated 50,000 metric tons of e-waste enters India illegally every year, according to Jackson, and approximately "500 loads of used electronics enter Nigeria each month."

These shipments get through because their labels claim equipment is for reuse, "when really it's just junk," she said.

The EPA administrator, noting she had canceled a planned trip to Africa because of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, said, "I don't need to go to Africa or China or India to know about the electronics that are discarded at open dumpsites, the copper wires burning in open-air incinerators, or the acid used to strip gold and other metals for resale. I don't need to go there to know about the ash-blackened rivers or the toxic fumes polluting the air. And I don't need to go there to know that workers are getting sick, and so are their children. I know all this, and so do each of you."

Tighter enforcement of existing laws and regulation is the "right place to start" in addressing e-waste, Jackson told the gathering, but went on to list a number of other necessary steps, including:

- Effective international collaboration.
- New or amended national legislation to close legal loopholes and "limit harmful exports that are happening under the name of legitimate reuse, refurbishment and recycling."
- More stringent regulation of e-waste.
- Establishment of standards and certification processes for e-waste recycling and disposal.
- Accurate data collection on the destination, treatment and disposition of e-waste.
- Increased coordination with port authorities and customs inspectors.

- Partnership with the private sector, specifically with manufacturers of computers and other electronics.

"We know that this problem is complex," Jackson said. "There is no simple solution or easy fix."

Statement on Combating Drug Trafficking

U.S. working with Afghanistan's neighbors, regional, international actors

United States Mission to the OSCE
Statement on Combating Drug Trafficking
As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 27, 2010

Trafficking in illicit drugs poses a serious threat to global security, both within and beyond the OSCE region. Associated violence and corruption threaten security, undermine good governance and the rule of law, and hinder the development of prosperous, democratic societies. In addition, criminal and terrorist networks frequently rely on funds generated by trafficking to finance their activities. Today, trafficking in narcotics and chemical precursors across Afghanistan's borders poses a particular threat, not only to the long-term security and stability of Afghanistan, but also the long-term security and stability of the entire OSCE region.

Clearly, drug trafficking is a shared problem. It affects all OSCE participating States. And a shared problem brings with it a common and shared responsibility. It requires a shared response and a long-term commitment to finding a solution.

The United States has made this commitment. We continue to emphasize the value of a regional approach to support the implementation of the three UN drug conventions -- the framework for international drug control. Such an approach has recently been reaffirmed by a high-level session of the United Nations' technical body on drugs, the Commission on Narcotic drugs.

Moreover, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has taken the lead in developing several programs with donor and regional support to assist counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan. Specific programs include a multifaceted effort to target drug trafficking, chemical control, alternate development assistance as well as demand reduction in the context of the "Paris Pact."

Against this backdrop, the United States also believes that the OSCE plays a role in strengthening regional and international efforts to combat drug smuggling.

The OSCE has made important contributions to the overall framework of security. It has organized seminars

and training programs; provided legislative and technical assistance to national authorities and law enforcement officials; and facilitated regional and international cooperation and information exchange. Since 2007, the OSCE has focused in particular on providing training for Afghan police in the Russian Federation and other specialized training institutions in Tajikistan and Turkey.

We hope to build on this expertise to develop further projects, particularly in cooperation with Russia and other participating States -- and especially in relation to Afghanistan. The Afghan drug trade is linked with the insurgency and with corruption undermining the government and it destabilizes and undermines the broader region. In this context, the United States is working with Afghanistan and regional and international partners to disrupt cross-border flows of drugs, chemical precursors, and illicit funds. Our new whole-of-government approach emphasizes interdiction and agricultural development.

The U.S. is also working closely with Afghanistan's neighbors and regional and international actors, including the UNODC. A significant new initiative is our work with the Russian Federation, through the Bilateral Presidential Commission, to stem regional drug flows, promote information exchange on illicit financial flows, and reduce heroin demand.

We look forward to building on this cooperation in the months to come. We also look forward to expanded OSCE efforts -- in close cooperation with international and regional leaders such as the UNODC -- to increase border security and contribute to the counter-narcotics effort. Continued legislative and technical assistance projects, enhanced training activities, and other efforts can serve a useful purpose in coordination with ongoing efforts through UNODC and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). Accordingly, we look forward to the Chairmanship's July conference on combating the threat of illicit drugs and strengthening control of precursor chemicals. We hope the conference will be just one of many OSCE initiatives in the fight against the opiate trade and regional insecurity -- a fight that clearly requires a long-term, sustained commitment.

Helping Women Farmers Increases Yields to Society

U.S. initiative reflects belief that women farmers can bring food security

By Charles W. Corey and Analeed Marcus
Staff Writers

Washington — To strengthen agriculture as a community and family enterprise, development experts must talk to men and women farmers separately, says Ritu Sharma.

Sharma, president of Women Thrive Worldwide, is a

leading voice on women's issues as they relate to U.S. foreign policy. She spoke to the Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security in Washington on May 20. The symposium focused on helping countries that struggle to produce or purchase enough food for their populations.

Members of the U.S. Congress and agriculture and humanitarian-aid experts participated. U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv Shah, who agrees with Sharma about the importance of women farmers, delivered the keynote speech.

"The people who matter most aren't the financiers, the [agriculture] ministers or the aid workers," Shah said. "They are the female farmers who are the under-tapped solution to this problem [of food availability]. ...When women control gains in income, they are more likely to spend those gains on family needs."

Shah used the symposium as a platform to unveil a U.S. initiative called "Feed the Future," a plan to reduce hunger by helping to develop the agriculture sectors in a number of poor countries.

To succeed, specialists agreed, barriers that hinder family farms from greater success must be knocked down. In the world's poorest regions, women produce 80 percent of the food supply but receive less than 10 percent of credit going to farmers, according to the United Nations' World Food Programme.

"We know a lot about what the possible barriers are," Sharma said. She listed several: lack of credit and banking services; lack of "inputs" such as fertilizer, seed and equipment; bans on women owning land; poor infrastructure, such as few roads or no other transportation systems; and unavailability of insurance for crops.

Many of the barriers especially harm women farmers. In some places, for example, banks do not allow women to open accounts and women are not permitted by law to own land. Women also have strength limitations for farm work and carrying equipment, according to Sharma, a fact that needs to be taken into consideration by those helping to develop better resources for them.

The Feed the Future initiative plans to invest \$3.5 billion through the next three years in agriculture in some 20 potential focus countries. One of the goals is to increase 40 million people's incomes during the next 10 years, Shah said.

And that includes women's incomes.

"We are focusing on women in everything we do," by

targeting financial aid on what are traditionally women-grown crops such as sweet potatoes and legumes and by providing fellowships to women pursuing agricultural degrees, Shah said.

"There have been a lot of agricultural business initiatives before, but none of them have focused on agriculture, women and children, and that's sort of the unique factor here," said Ambassador William Garvelink, who is coordinating the U.S. government's Feed the Future efforts.

Sharma, a first-generation American whose family left the Punjab region of India and immigrated to the United States, said she is pleased with the administration's focus. She noted that she is always impressed when talking to women farmers because of their grasp of the markets. As an advocate for the empowerment of women, Sharma's organization aims to institutionalize gender-sensitive principles so that they become part of the fabric of how all development institutions work.

WOMEN-OWNED FARMS AS ECONOMIC ENGINES

To show the ways women farmers can wield economic power, Sharma described five determined Honduran women who have only primary school educations.

The women banded together, bought land and started growing coffee in an attempt to reduce domestic violence. These women believed they needed economic independence to stop the violence, and they saw coffee farming as the way to get that independence.

At first, "they could not own the land," she said, "but they managed to overcome that. Then they could not own coffee plants. They managed to overcome that. Then they had to get inputs. Then they needed to expand and then to increase the [coffee's] quality."

The women's co-op now exports 10,000 tons of fair-trade coffee a year to Europe.

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